



# CITY OF TUCSON



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## NEWS RELEASE

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Roberto A. Villaseñor  
Chief of Police

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**Date:** 3/23/2012  
**TDD:** 791-2639

### OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING 1700 BLOCK OF EAST GLENN STREET

On March 23, 2012 at approximately 1:30 a.m., the Tucson Police Department received a 911 call from a female caller who stated that her estranged husband was at her residence and was armed with a gun. As officers were responding to the scene, additional information was provided that indicated that the husband was breaking into the residence. Officers from Operations Division West, the Gang Tactical Unit, the Service Dog Unit, and the Force Unit all responded to the residence, with the first officers arriving within approximately three minutes of the initial 911 call. During that time, the caller indicated that there were several adults in the residence and that they had retreated into a bathroom to hide from the suspect. Officers first observed the suspect, who was inside the house, through an open door and several windows moments after arriving at the house. The suspect was armed with a handgun, which he held to his own head upon seeing the officers.

Officers immediately began giving the suspect instructions to drop the gun and surrender. The suspect responded to these commands by telling making repeated statements of his intent to force the officers to shoot him, telling them that he planned to die, and making statements that he had been using illegal drugs throughout the day.

Within minutes of establishing contact with the suspect, an officer with Crisis Intervention Team training attempted to establish a constructive dialogue with the suspect, with the goal of gaining his cooperation towards a peaceful resolution. Crisis Intervention Team-trained officers have received specialized training in the handling of contacts with emotionally disturbed people or people otherwise experiencing an acute mental or emotional crisis. During these attempts, the suspect remained completely non-compliant and irrational, and instead of disarming himself, he retrieved a rifle from inside the residence, and began to point it at his own head.

As negotiation efforts continued, officers began to develop a plan to rescue the victims from inside the residence, where they were effectively being held hostage. A well-coordinated plan was devised and executed when a contingent of officers surreptitiously forced entry through a rear door, entered the residence, and escorted three adult females, one adult male, and a Great Dane from the bathroom where they had been forced to take refuge. The victims were evacuated to safety while negotiating officers diverted the suspect's attention away from that portion of the residence.

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For accommodations; materials in accessible formats; foreign language interpreters; and/or materials in a language other than English, please contact the Tucson Police Department Public Information Office at (520) 791-4852 or (520) 791-2639 for TDD at least five (5) business days in advance. Para arreglos; materiales en formatos accesibles; interpretes de idioma extranjero; y/o materiales en otro idioma que no sea inglés, por favor comunicarse al Departamento de la Policía de Tucson a la sección de Información Pública al (520) 791-4852 o (520) 791-2639 para TDD por lo menos con cinco (5) días hábiles de anticipación.

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Once the victims were safely evacuated from the residence, officers moved their positions further away from the residence in an effort to encourage the suspect to calm down and possibly be more receptive to the ongoing negotiation efforts. Instead of becoming cooperative, the suspect made statements about using more drugs, and officers observed him “snorting” suspected illicit drugs while continuing to make statements about forcing the officers to shoot or kill him.

At approximately 2:45 a.m., members of the Hostage Crisis Team arrived and began to take over negotiations efforts. The suspect continued to make numerous statements indicating that he intended to die at the residence and that he was going to force officers into a shooting. The suspect temporarily retreated further into the residence and hid inside a closet. He returned to the living room area a short time later, still armed with the rifle, the muzzle of which he held to his head or face nearly continuously.

By approximately 4:50 a.m., members of the Tucson Police Department’s SWAT had taken up positions around the residence to contain the suspect and prevent him from escaping into the residential neighborhood while armed and apparently suicidal and/or homicidal. Shortly after 5 a.m., the Tucson Police Department’s Bomb Squad was able to maneuver a remotely operated robot, equipped with two-way communications equipment, into the living room of the residence. For nearly 90 minutes, Hostage Crisis Team negotiators engaged in a continuous dialogue with the suspect through the robot-mounted equipment, making every effort to encourage and convince him to surrender peacefully and without violence. During this time, the suspect worked himself into a barricaded position behind overturned and rearranged furniture in the living room and appeared totally unwilling to comply.

At approximately 6:30 a.m., nearly five hours after the initial 911 call was received, the suspect stood up from a barricaded position behind a sofa, rapidly leveled the muzzle of the rifle towards SWAT personnel who were just outside the front door, and fired at least one shot at the officers. Officer Dan Spencer, an eleven-year veteran of the agency and nine-year veteran SWAT member, responded to the deadly threat posed to him and other officers by firing his SWAT-issued rifle, striking the suspect at least once.

Specially trained SWAT Medics immediately moved in to render aid to the suspect, and Tucson Fire Department personnel, who were staged a few hundred yards from the incident location, were summoned to assist. In spite of their life-saving efforts, the suspect succumbed to his injuries and died at the scene.

Detectives from the Night Detective Unit, the Homicide Unit, and the Office of Internal Affairs responded to the scene to continue the investigation. The investigation is ongoing as detectives examine and collect evidence at the scene and interview witnesses and involved officers. The Homicide Unit will continue the criminal investigation. The Office of Internal Affairs will conduct a separate and parallel administrative investigation, examining the actions of department personnel in response to this incident. This type of post-shooting administrative review is standard protocol when an officer discharges their weapon in the line of duty, and is utilized to determine whether department policies were followed, and if current training, equipment, supervision, and policies are adequate and appropriate.

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